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**Project Title: Attitudes towards and Perceptions of Self-harm in General Practice:
An Exploratory Study in Western Australia.**

Abstract

Self-harm is a common behaviour in some individuals. Self-harm is known to occur across the developmental lifespan regardless of age and gender, although it is more common among adolescents and young adults than other age groups. Past studies have reported that the overall attitudes and perceptions of medical and health professionals towards patients who self-harm are often negative and stigma is a major contributor in preventing formal help-seeking in self-harm patients. However, the attitudes and understandings of general practitioners (GPs) in Australia towards their patients who self-harm have not been investigated. This study aimed to address this gap in the literature and to discover the opinions and views of GPs in regards to the role of social media in perpetuating self-harming behaviour. A survey was developed and administered to a convenience sample of GPs (a total of 72 participants completed the survey) in Western Australia over the duration of two months. The results found GPs held a mixture of both positive and negative attitudes and perceptions towards patients who engage in self-harm. Half of the respondents had training in mental health care in the past but perceived themselves as not confident enough in treating such patients and they desired more training. GPs had negative perceptions towards social media's influence on self-harm. Although the sample was small, the findings pointed to the need and importance of further education and training about self-harm in order for GPs to address their patients' experiences and needs. An encouraging finding with implications for general practices and the treatment of self-harm patients was that GPs welcomed and desired such training.